In the Claims:

1-6 (Cancelled)

7. (Previously Presented) A method of identifying a compound that increases the activity of an endothelin converting enzyme (ECE) polypeptide, the method comprising:

contacting Aβ with an ECE polypeptide in the presence of said compound; and

detecting the amount of unhydrolyzed Aβ,

wherein a decrease in the amount of unhydrolyzed Aβ produced in the presence of said compound compared to the amount of unhydrolyzed Aβ produced in the absence of said compound is an indication that said compound increases the activity of an ECE polypeptide.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein said ECE and said Aβ are in a cell.

9. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein said unhydrolyzed Aβ is detected using an immunoassay.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Original) A method of identifying a compound that has anti-hypertension activity but does not cause an increase in the level of Aβ, the method comprising:

contacting Aβ with an ECE in the presence of said compound;

detecting the amount of unhydrolyzed Aβ, wherein lack of an increase in the amount of unhydrolyzed Aβ produced in the presence of said compound compared to the amount of unhydrolyzed Aβ produced in the absence of said compound is an indication that said compound does not cause an increase in the level of said ECE; and

determining the anti-hypertension activity of said compound.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the anti-hypertension activity of said compound is determined in an animal.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein said animal is a spontaneously hypersensitive rat (SHR).

14. (Currently Amended) A method of determining that an anti-hypertension compound or candidate compound does not cause an increase in the level of Aβ, wherein said anti-hypertension compound or candidate compound is an ECE inhibitor, the method comprising:

contacting Aβ with an ECE in the presence of said anti-hypertension compound or candidate compound; and

detecting the amount of unhydrolyzed Aβ,

wherein the lack of an increase in the amount of unhydrolyzed Aβ produced in the presence of said compound compared to the amount of unhydrolyzed Aβ produced in the absence of said compound is an indication that said compound does not cause an increase in the level of said ECE.

15-39 (Canceled)

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8, wherein said cell is selected from the group consisting of H4 neuroglioma cells, CHO cells, and HUVEC cells.

41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7, wherein said compound is selected from the group consisting of a nucleic acid, a polypeptide, a chemical compound, a bacterial extract, a fungal extract, and a plant extract.

42. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein said unhydrolyzed Aβ is detected in said animal.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein said unhydrolyzed Aβ is detected using an immunoassay.

44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein said compound is selected from the group consisting of a nucleic acid, a polypeptide, a chemical compound, a bacterial extract, a fungal extract, and a plant extract.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said unhydrolyzed Aβ is detected using an immunoassay.

46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said unhydrolyzed Aβ is detected in an animal.

47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46, wherein said animal is a SHR.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said compound is selected from the group consisting of a nucleic acid, a polypeptide, a chemical compound, a bacterial extract, a fungal extract, and a plant extract.